Hunt Estate Challenge

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SHREVEPORT, La. (AP)—A son of the late oil magnate H. L. Hunt has testified that family members knew Hunt fathered children by a woman who now wants a share of the Hunt fortune.

Ray Lee Hunt testified Monday in the opening day of trial on a federal court suit by Frania Tye Lee, 73, of Atlanta. Mrs. Lee claims she was married to the elder Hunt for nine years before finding out he had another wife.

Ray Hunt, a 34-year-old son by Hunt's second publicly acknowledged marriage and executor of his father's estate, told the court that he and other family members always thought of Mrs. Lee's four children as half-brothers and half-sisters.

Mrs. Lee claims she and Hunt were married from 1925 until 1934, when she found out he was married to the other woman. She says it was during this period that Hut became a millionnaire. He died in 1974.

With Mrs. Lee in court were two of her sons, Hugh Lee Hunt and Haroldina French, two of the four children that the suit says were fathered by Haroldson Lafayette Hunt during the bigamous marriage. The other two are Howard Hunt and Helen Hunt.

In court at the defense table were three Hunt sons by Lyda Bunker Hunt, to whom he was married from 1914 until her death in 1955; Lamar Hunt, whose interests include ownership of the Kansas City Chiefs of the National Football League; Nelson Bunker Hunt; and William Herbert Hunt.

The suit said the marriage to Mrs. Lee took place in 1925 in Tampa, Fla., with H. L. Hunt registering as Franklin Hunt. An attorney for Mrs. Lee said she knew her busband as both Franklin Hunt and Major Hunt.

The marriage ended, the suit said, in 1934 when Frania Hunt, then living in Dallas, discovered her husband had another wife and six children living less than 100 miles away in Tyler, Tex.

Mrs. Lee contends she was fraudulently induced into signing a 1942 settlement in which she relinquished her interest in Hunt's property.

A document on file signed by "Frances Tye" refers to a settlement in which she was to be awarded $100,000 in cash and $2,000 a month in revenue from a large Texas oil lease. Frances is the Americanization of the Polish name Frania.

The suit asks that Mrs. Lee be declared Hunt's putative—roughly, commonly accepted—wife. By Louisiana law, she would then be entitled to half of the riches accumulated by Hunt between 1925 and 1934—and the subsequent fruits of that wealth.

In 1957, two years after Lyda Bunker Hunt died, Hunt married Ruth May, who had worked at a Hunt oil company office in Shreveport.